

SPANISH

Paper 1344/01

Speaking

General Comments

There was a small cohort of candidates this year and performances ranged from satisfactory to excellent in different areas. Centres were well organised and extremely hospitable to the visiting Examiner, which made the task of conducting the orals a real pleasure for everybody concerned.

The rubric states that candidates must research a topic related to the history, current affairs or culture (including art, cinema, literature and traditions) of the Hispanic world. Indeed, all topics this summer were relevant and interesting, and candidates seized the opportunity to find out more about different aspects of several Spanish-speaking countries. Centres are reminded that candidates could be encouraged to research topics which are related to their other Pre-U or A Level subjects, as this ensures that Spanish becomes more clearly relevant to candidates and possible future careers.

A few examples of fruitful topics might be the study of a particular novel or film, a historical subject such as the Spanish Civil War or the Cuban Revolution, the economy or politics of a particular Latin American country, the drug trade in Colombia, environmental issues in Costa Rica, nationalism in modern Spain, an artist like Picasso or Frida Kahlo, a festival like *La Patum de Berga* or *El Día de los Muertos* in Mexico, or such different musicians as Manuel de Falla and Joaquín Sabina. The range is vast, but the topic must be suitably academic and the approach should go beyond the factual so, for example, simply dealing with the life of a popular singer would not be acceptable. If in doubt, Centres are encouraged to contact the board to ascertain the validity of a particular topic.

Candidates are reminded that, in order to score highly in this part of the examination, excellent factual knowledge must be supported by relevant illustration and the expression of personal opinions. The fluency of the discussion and the quality of the language (range, accuracy, pronunciation and intonation) also contribute to a successful oral performance.

For the smooth running of examinations, Centres are asked to send to the Examiner the forms identifying the title of topics as well as 5–8 headings at least two weeks before the date of the oral examinations. If needed, candidates may bring up to three pieces of visual material to the examination room.

SPANISH

Paper 1344/02

Listening, Reading and Writing

General Comments

This is the first year of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish Short Course examination. This report will, therefore, look at the performance in this first year, but will mainly concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations.

This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish language skills in Listening, Reading and Writing.

Part I: Listening Comprehension

In **Question 1** candidates heard an item about a food fair held in Barcelona. They were given a printed summary of the extract with five gaps left blank. Below the summary, they were offered a choice of three words to complete the sentences and had to underline the most appropriate option. The material was understood well by candidates and generally the correct options were chosen. During the preparation for this type of question, it is essential that candidates should become confident in finding and using Spanish synonyms.

The extract for **Question 2** was an interview with the Spanish actor Javier Bardem after he had received an Oscar for his performance in the film "No Country for Old Men". The exercise, involving straightforward Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally done well. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. All the relevant information must be given but candidates are not required to answer in full sentences. Nevertheless, there was some evidence of candidates attempting to transcribe the material without really understanding it.

In **Question 3** candidates heard an interview with a Spanish psychologist discussing drug use by young people. The material certainly seemed accessible and candidates made a good attempt at answering the English questions set on the material. Sometimes, however, rather than misunderstanding the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly.

Part II: Reading Comprehension

Question 1 involved a short article about the rise in digital music downloading. The material was understood well by the candidates. The exercise, involving Spanish questions to be answered in Spanish, was generally well done by the candidates. Once again, it is important to stress that candidates should aim to communicate a correct response, but should not reproduce the original text word-for-word.

The passage used for **Question 2** was a longer article about the dangers facing the Galapagos Islands, with questions set in Spanish. The same criteria apply about using one's own words.

Question 3 involved an article about a Spanish family where three generations were living together. The material was well understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way.

Part III: Guided Writing

Candidates were given a choice of two texts and had to write a response of 200-250 words in Spanish, based on a series of five bullet points. The first article discussed the situation of school failure in Spain. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article and discussing the consequences of school failure; then moving on to give their opinions of education in their own country and to discuss the problems facing young people today; and finally they had to offer a conclusion as to whether it is easy to be a young person nowadays. The second article referred to the health risks associated with living too close to an airport as a result of the noise pollution. Candidates had to write a letter to the newspaper in response to the article, firstly giving their reaction to the article and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of air transport; then moving on to argue whether or not a limit should be placed on airport expansion and to discuss the problem of noise in our modern lives; and finally they had to offer a conclusion as to whether it is possible to lead a healthy lifestyle in a contaminated world. The material contained in the two extracts was clearly accessible to candidates, who succeeded in writing appropriate responses.

The response is marked according to the published marking grids. Firstly, the essay is marked for Content according to the task set and the bullet points, bearing in mind originality and development of ideas. Then the Quality of Language is assessed, taking into account both accuracy and variety of lexis and structure and to what extent error impedes comprehension. Candidates are expected to use an acceptable formal letter format and to write within the word limits.

Advice and Guidance

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given;
- highlight the question words (*¿quién?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿cuándo?*, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed;
- note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted;
- try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word-for-word;
- practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts;
- remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling;
- beware *false friends* (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings);
- realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings. Choose the correct one (e.g. does *pueblo* mean “village” or “people” in the context?);
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word (e.g. *velocidad* is usually “speed” in English, not “velocity”);
- make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it;
- make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information.

Guided Writing

Covering the content

- Read the two stimulus passages and decide which one you wish to tackle;
- pick the topic that most appeals to you and is most in accordance with your strengths;
- ensure that you have enough knowledge to tackle the question and enough vocabulary associated with the topic;
- read the chosen stimulus text again: analyse it to grasp the aim, content and context of the passage and to note key words and concepts;
- study the bullet points carefully and consider the full implications and scope of the requirements;
- pay attention to the form the response should take: (a letter? a report?);
- adopt the correct linguistic register: (formal? informal?);

- plan carefully and stick to your plan, avoiding digressions, getting carried away, recapitulation, putting in afterthoughts, etc.
- each bullet point must be covered and developed, but not necessarily given equal weight;
- make sure that ideas follow a logical sequence, both overall and within each paragraph;
- avoid generalisations; make sure that ideas are illustrated and substantiated;
- take care to ensure full coverage of the content within the limits of the word count;
- develop the skill of communicating succinctly but effectively;
- leave enough time at the end to check your writing for accuracy.

The Spanish language requirements for comprehension questions and the Guided Writing tasks

- Remember that essential basic grammar knowledge is required. You should aim to respond in accurate language;
- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);
- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó*? *esta*, *está* or *ésta*?);
- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully;
- develop a bank of suitable phrases for your essay writing: how to begin (*para empezar*), making general statements (*hablando en forma general*), giving opinions (*me parece que*), explaining (*es decir*), disagreeing (*no estoy de acuerdo con*), giving justification (*no cabe duda de que*), expanding ideas (*no sólo ... sino también*), contradicting (*a pesar de que*), suggesting (*es posible que*) and concluding (*en resumen*), etc. (NB. these are only suggestions and candidates should build up their own banks of phrases).